Tips to be a Safe and Successful Motorcycle Rider

1. Get Your Permit
    a. Study the DOL Motorcycle Operator Manual
    b. Take a knowledge test at your local DOL
    c. Must have a valid state driver's license
2. Find a Buddy
    a. Provides a sense of security as you learn to ride in traffic
    b. Helps with learning the basics
    c. Able to answer questions as you learn
3. Practice the Basics
    a. Accelerating
        i. Turn throttle with right hand
        ii. Pull clutch with left hand
        iii. Shift gears with left foot
    b. Braking
        i. 70% of braking power provided by front brake
        ii. Engage front brake with right hand
        iii. Engage left brake with right foot pedal
    c. Corner
        i. Slow down at approach
        ii. Look through and lean into the turn
        iii. Accelerate as you exit the turn
4. Take a State Sponsored Motorcycle Class
    a. Required if you're under 18
    b. Only takes a weekend
    c. Can take endorsement test at end of class
5. Get Your Endorsement
    a. Must take a knowledge and a ride test
    b. Test out at the end of your motorcycle class
    c. Take the tests at a DOL that offers it





AAA Washington Interview Presentation – Script

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. This time of year, as our weather gets nicer, we see more and more motorcycles on the road. As a motorcycle rider myself, safe riding is definitely important to me. When I see a rider on the road doing something stupid, or even illegal, I feel frustrated. Reckless riders reflect negatively on the riding community as a whole. We should be thinking of everyone we share the road with, but especially how our actions reflect on our fellow riders. Today I wanted to share with you some things that are, in my opinion, important for every rider to be safe and successful.

If you're a new rider you are going to be so excited to just get out on the road. But, before you get on your bike and start riding, take the time to go get your permit. Riding legally is as important as riding safely. Getting your permit is as simple as taking a test. Be sure to study the motorcycle operator's guide beforehand! You'll learn important information that will help you prepare to be a safe and respectful rider.

Once you have your permit, try and find a buddy to practice with. Having someone to ride with can provide a sense of security as a new rider. Then if you run into difficulties or have questions about your technique, you've got someone right there with you to help you out. Now, let's look at the basic skills you'll need to learn to be successful.

Learning how to accelerate is the first skill every young rider needs to know. You can't get far if you can't move the bike. The most difficult part is learning how to coordinate your hands and your feet to keep the bike moving as you shift gears while speeding up or slowing down. The best way to learn is to practice shifting gears with the bike parked. To shift gears you squeeze the clutch with your left hand, and then use the pedal at your left foot, called the gear shift, to move between gears. The pedal begins in the Neutral position. You then move the pedal down once for first gear and up for second through fifth gear. Once comfortable doing this, it's time to add forward movement.

To get going you use your right hand to turn the right handle or throttle, which is like the gas pedal in your car. Then use the motions you just practiced to shift gears. As a rule you'll change gears every 10 to 15 mile per hour increase or decrease in speed. As a rider you quickly become familiar with how your bike sounds, so you can learn how this rule applies to your particular bike.

Now that you're moving the next skill you'll have to learn is proper braking technique. Learning how to use both your brakes together is important as it can be easy to favor one brake over the other. There's a common misperception that the majority of your braking power should be provided by your rear brake. This can lead to a loss of control of your bike. For safety, 70% of your braking power should be provided by the front brake.

The front brake is a lever on the right handle and the rear brake is a pedal at the right foot. Initially you want to apply even pressure to both brakes, gradually decreasing your rear brake pressure while increasing the pressure to your front brake. When riding in traffic it is important to give yourself ample room to stop your bike, especially if you're a new rider.

Now, you'll put these skills together as you learn how to corner. Learning how to corner correctly is valuable, as errors in a corner can be costly. If you corner too wide you'll wind up in the next lane of traffic; not wide enough and you risk over correcting and losing control of your bike. To corner safely it's important remember these four things:

First, slow down. You'll need to decrease your speed as well as down shift as you enter the corner. You don't want to enter the corner too fast, as you could lose control of your bike.

Next, look through the corner. This is a very important thing to remember. It just means following your intended route through the corner with your eyes. This helps you focus on where you want the bike to go and ensures that your path is clear of any obstructions.

Third, lean into the corner. This can be a little scary at first. When in our cars we tend to lean away from the turn. On a bike this can be disastrous. When riding you want to lean with the bike as you enter the bend of the corner. The closer to 90 degrees the turn is, the more you will need to turn your handlebars and the farther you'll need to lean.

Lastly, accelerate as you exit the corner. As you come out of the turn you'll straighten your bike, open the throttle and shift gears back up to the posted speed limit..

The only way to master these skills is to practice. Find a safe area where you can start and stop without worry of interrupting traffic. As you are learning how to speed up and slow down, you will likely stall your bike or even drop it as you practice your cornering. Don't worry about it! Everyone does in the beginning.

I am a big proponent of every rider attending a state sponsored motorcycle class. I definitely thought I was a good rider before my class, only to learn that I needed more practice on tight corners. Through that class I was able to improve my cornering technique, making me a better rider. When it came time to take my endorsement test I was able to pass on my first try. I don't doubt that it was due to the instruction and help I received in that class.

The final thing you'll need to do as a rider is to get your endorsement! An estimated 28 to 33% of riders on the road don't have their endorsement, which is pretty scary. It's easy to think that you are a good rider because you've been riding "forever" or a friend taught you and you think you have the hang of it. Getting an endorsement should be a sense of pride, because it's a way to let you know that you really do know what you need to join everyone on the road. And getting an endorsement is pretty easy. If you take a state sponsored motorcycle class, you'll be tested at the end of the class. Then just take your passing grade to any driver's license office within 180 days to become an endorsed rider.